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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, CONSTITUTION, ELECTIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES, CORRUPTION; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: Discussion on the Constitution, Elections, Political Parties and Corruption were the major editorial themes of the daily newspapers on October 4, 2005. END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES

[1A.](#) "What If We Said No to the Constitution?"
(Al-Zaman, independent, anti coalition, published this page-three editorial by Hadi Jalo Mar'ee)

[Editor's note: Until yesterday (10/3/05), Al-Zaman's editorial position was staunchly anti-constitution]

"Before October 15th, the groups that want to reject or approve the constitution are working hard to mobilize more supporters towards their positions; this can be described as electoral advertising in preparation for the public referendum.

"I think that it is very important for Iraqis to accept the constitution not because it guarantees our future, but because if the constitution is rejected the whole political process will collapse and render useless the giant efforts of the past two years and perpetuate instability. If this constitution passes, there will be a permanent government for at least four years and this government will be able to launch a large campaign of reconstruction in Iraq.

"We do not want to go backwards and for this reason we have to accept the current constitution. However, this does not mean that those who call for rejecting the constitution have illegitimate demands. It seems that they do not reject the whole constitution but rather want to amend some of its articles. As a result, their demand is legal even if other groups disagree.

"The United Iraqi Alliance [Shi'a] totally refuses to strike the deba'athification clause from the constitution but I think this matter will be amended in the future because there is no use for any group to insist on disagreement. There must be compromises to reach solutions concerning pending issues in the constitution or else, rejection will destroy the whole process. As Iraqis, we want Iraq to be united and developed and we are not pleased when our cities are destroyed and our people are being killed. May God show us the right way for the sake of our beloved country."

[1B.](#) "The Referendum Represents a Difficult Equation"
(Al-Zaman, independent, anti coalition, published this page-five editorial by Hadi Jalo Mar'ee)

"From 3 October 05 [Editor's Note: Due to a technical error this translation (from 10/3) did not appear in yesterday's Iraq Media Reaction Report. This editorial marks a dramatic shift in Al-Zaman's position-now in support of the constitution]

"The constitutional committee has completed the drafting of the constitution and it has submitted the draft document to the National Assembly after making some amendments. Those amendments were made to satisfy other groups that participate in the constitutional process. The United Iraqi Alliance [Shi'a], the Kurdish coalition, and Sunni representatives all had disputes over the issues of

federalism, the distribution of resources, the role of religion as well as other secondary objections. However, it seems that the draft constitution will be put to vote on October 15th and on that day, the Iraqi people will have their final say about approving or rejecting the constitution.

"We know that there are many political groups trying to influence people to approve the constitution. But, at the same time there are other groups that have made their best efforts to reject this constitution. Those who failed to include their demands in the draft constitution have started to mobilize people in Sunni areas in an attempt to reject the constitution on referendum day. This is a difficult mission to implement because most of cities that are likely to reject the constitution suffer from instability and a lack of security.

"In addition, citizens in those areas feel frustrated due to the deterioration of the security situation and this may affect their participation in the referendum. We can hypothesize that voters in those areas would go to polling centers in large numbers so that they could reject the constitution--there are no real guarantees that we will have enough voters to reject the constitution. Moreover, those who want to reject the constitution could not make alliances with other groups that oppose it. We have heard that the Sadists have announced that they will not work through alliances but will depend on their own policy to study the constitution's articles and will then make a decision and recommendation.

"Hence, it seems that the attitude of those who want to approve the constitution is stronger than those who want to reject it. For this reason, we have to think deeply about how to use wise methods to engage in dialogue and discuss issues in order to reach an agreement concerning the constitution."

1C. "Does Amr Musa Dare Visit Baghdad?"
(Al-Bayyna, affiliated with the Hezbollah Movement in Iraq, published this front-page unattributed editorial)

"All news reports say that the Secretary General of the Arab League, Amr Musa, will visit Iraq soon. Some of these reports indicate that Musa made suggestions that Iraqis reconcile with Saddam loyalists and Ba'athists. Moreover, reports have said that Musa wants the elected Iraqi government to implement his orders. If those reports are true, we want to ask the following questions: 'Can a killer who is well known for his hatred against Iraqis be our guest? Is it acceptable for the butcher of the Arab League to visit us while we know nothing about his agenda?'

"If Amr Musa came to apologize and begin a new relationship with Iraq, we would welcome his visit because Iraqis are accustomed to welcoming their guests and they do not reject visitors. But, after the hospitality period ends we would tell him to leave and let him know that it is our poor people who will judge him--they are the ones who have learned to not let their enemies escape without punishment.

"On the topic of reconciliation, the Iraqi people do not want anyone to interfere in their affairs. We do not have any conflict with the so-called Sunnis. In fact, our real problem is with the killers and extremists. We consider Sunnis to be honorable Iraqis and we do not think that whoever loves Iraq (even if they had disagreements with us) would call for killing Iraqis. In spite of our different sects and nationalities we are all Iraqis and we are ready to engage in dialogue with anyone, providing that the cursed Arab League does not interfere."

1D. "Yes to the Constitution"
(Al-Dawa, affiliated with the Al-Dawa Islamic Party in Iraq, published this page-four editorial by Haneen Al-Wannan)

"Iraqis are waiting for referendum day--a day that represents a new awakening for each Iraqi and represents progress towards civilization, which we missed out on because of the tyrant's regime. Iraqi civilization produced the first constitution in the world, which is the Code of Hammurabi; it was later that divine constitutions appeared to guide humanity on the path toward goodness. When Islam was revealed new regulations, for freedom and dignity for humanity, were established for individuals in order to create a just society.

"Islamic doctrines are still in effect today which is why Islam is considered the main source of legislation in this era. Iraq functioned under a temporary constitution during the former regime, because it served the opportunist's interests; people were unable to organize their political, economic, and social life. People merely waited for rulers to issue new regulations, which suited the rulers and no one else."

"But today we are basking in the glory of a tremendous national day, which witnesses the drafting of the constitution by Iraqi hands (from all over the country). This constitution is not temporary, but it is permanent. Thus it cannot be changed according to rulers' (dictators) desires. This constitution represents hope; therefore women should step ahead of men in voting 'yes' to this constitution, just as they did in the last election."

E. "Disagreements"
(Al-Sabah, independent, pro-coalition, published this front-page editorial by Mohammed Abdul-Jabbar)

"It is meaningless to deny the disagreement between the President Al-Talabani and the PM Al-Ja'afari, because it is well known by many people inside the ruling circle. Such disagreements are typical in democratic regimes. Disagreements among officials in democratic regimes are allowed, but that's not the case in dictatorships because the leader behaves as the only ruler, and all disagreements with him are forbidden-discord could lead to detention or assassination.

"The current Iraqi body is a coalition government that includes a republican presidency, a national assembly, a supreme judicial council, and a cabinet. Therefore, it isn't expected that all parts of this government would be in harmony and it is quite possible that disagreements would surface around specific issues. Recently reports of disagreements between Al-Ja'afari and Al-Talabani were made public and several letters were reportedly sent to Al-Ja'afari by the President and a few ministers who complained that they received no response from PM Al-Ja'afari. It is necessary that people know such things, because we are in a democratic country now and people have the right to know everything that happens in the ruling circle."

F. "Hooray to Amr Musa"
(Al-Siyada, independent, published this last-page editorial by Abdul Karim Mahmud)

"Yesterday, the Arab League's Ministerial Committee on Iraq decided to send the Secretary General of the Arab League, Amr Musa, to Iraq to meet with Iraqi political groups and to discuss convening a national reconciliation conference.

"We welcome this visit because Amr Musa is well known for his attitudes toward Iraq and Iraqis. However, this visit has come very late due to the negative Arab attitudes that unfortunately, laid the ground for the occupation of Iraq. Consequently, this has led to disasters and our people have paid the price of this occupation. For the Iraqi people who are concerned with their identity (Arabism) and national unity, this visit is important. It is also important to those who reject sectarianism and division.

"We say hooray to Amr Musa and hooray to Iraqi national reconciliation that unites all Iraqis and will not marginalize any sect or political group. In this way, we will be able to give our people more chances to express their opinions so that they may judge issues that will determine the future of this country."

G. "Other Thieves"
(Al-Dustoor, independent, no bias, published this front-page editorial by Bassem Al-Sheikh)

"At a time when some people view the constitutional referendum as an opportunity to overcome a stage of the political process in Iraq, others see it as an opportunity for financial profit through exploiting funds allocated for the referendum.

"While honest Iraqis struggle on a daily basis, other individuals aim to rob Iraqis of funds meant to support their participation in national duties, and this has extended to the IECI (Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq) itself after falling victim to the fraud of an advertisement company during the previous elections when around half a million dollars were embezzled with the cooperation of officials within the commission, and today we are witnessing the same scheme again. So will Iraqis continue to be vulnerable to ongoing thefts?"

Headed?"
(Al-Ittihad, affiliated with the PUK, published this page-five column by Hamza Shamkhi)

"After the fall of the dictatorship and Saddam's escape on April 9, 2003, many parties, organizations and movements that opposed Saddam's regime have appeared on the political scene. Many of them worked to unify positions and coordinate to convene a national conference and form a political mass to lead the new Iraq through its sensitive stage.

"At the same time, other groups have appeared but they have rejected all aims and efforts to consolidate new national attitudes and provide alternative solutions to administer the country (rather than the foreign forces) after the fall of the former regime. These groups rejected the Governing Council and everything that resulted from it. They also rejected the Iraqi Transitional Government. Their rejection continued after that and it included the previous election; they disputed the former election's legitimacy and results despite the fact that millions of Iraqis participated in that election. Moreover, the rejection continued to include the TNA (Transitional National Assembly) which was formed on the basis of those elections. The permanent constitution drafting process faced their rejection also and they have called for a boycott or vote against the constitution in the upcoming referendum. Now, they are preparing to reject the upcoming Iraqi elections [in December] and refuse to recognize the new National Assembly and Iraqi Government.

"Actually, the continued rejection by those groups without providing alternate solutions is putting them in the position of restricting the entire political process. This means that they want to disrupt the political process because there is no justification for boycotting and rejecting any step towards the progress and independence of Iraq. There are many points that Iraqi sects are in dispute about--they need further discussion and negotiation to reach real harmony. Foreign troops will not withdraw from Iraq with such rejection but rather will leave the country if there are no rejections of the political process. Therefore, every sect should take its historic responsibility to face internal and external danger in stead of rejection and boycotting."

KHALILZAD